

# AMH2020: United States Since 1877

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Spring 2026 (3 credits)

## General Information

**Meeting days and times:** Tuesday & Thursday lecture, 8:30-9:20AM

Friday—meeting times vary by discussion section

**Lecture location:** PUGH 170

## Instructor:

**Name:** Dr. Benjamin Wise

**Office:** Keene-Flint 208

**Phone:** 352-273-3363

**Email:** [benwise@ufl.edu](mailto:benwise@ufl.edu)

**Office Hours:** Mon 4:00-5:00, Tues 9:30-11:30, & happily by appt

## Teaching Assistants:

**Name:** Thomas Miller

**Email:** [thomasmiller@ufl.edu](mailto:thomasmiller@ufl.edu)

**Name:** Aaya Kingsbury

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**Name:** Alexey Kotelvas

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## Meeting Times and Sections (Fridays):

Class Number	Friday Meeting Time	Location	TA
21513	2 <sup>nd</sup> Period (8:30-9:20)	Flint 121	TBA
21514	3 <sup>rd</sup> Period (9:35-10:25)	Weim 1070	TBA
21515	4 <sup>th</sup> Period (10:40-11:30)	Mat 0018	TBA
21516	6 <sup>th</sup> period (12:50-1:40)	Mat 0119	TBA
21517	6 <sup>th</sup> period (12:50-1:40)	MCCA 2196	TBA
21518	3 <sup>rd</sup> period (9:35-10:25)	TUR 2334	TBA

21519	7 <sup>th</sup> Period (1:55-2:45)	MAT 0119	TBA
21520	7 <sup>th</sup> Period (1:55-2:45)	MAT 0107	TBA

You must attend the TA section on Fridays that you have been assigned to.

## Course Description

In this course, students will trace the history of the United States from the end of the Reconstruction era to the contemporary era. Topics will include but are not limited to the rise of Industrialization, the United States' emergence as an actor on the world stage, Constitutional amendments and their impact, the Progressive era, World War I, the Great Depression and New Deal, World War II, the Civil Rights era, the Cold War, and the United States since 1989.

NOTE: All topics in this course will be taught objectively as objects of analysis, without endorsement of particular viewpoints, and will be observed from multiple perspectives. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, or belief. Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to explore readings and subject matter in this course. All perspectives will be respected in class discussions.

## Prerequisites

None.

## Materials Fee

None.

## General Education Designation: Social and Behavioral Sciences (S)

Social Science courses must afford students an understanding of the basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavior and past and present social, political, and economic issues. Social and Behavioral Sciences (S) is a sub-designation of Social Sciences at the University of Florida. These courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and underlying theory or methodologies used in the social and behavioral sciences. Students will learn to identify, describe and explain social institutions, structures or processes. These courses emphasize the effective application of accepted problem-solving techniques. Students will apply formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis to examine the processes and means by which

individuals make personal and group decisions, as well as the evaluation of opinions, outcomes or human behavior. Students are expected to assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.

Your successful completion of AMH2020 with a grade of "C" or higher will count towards UF's General Education State Core in Social and Behavioral Sciences (S). It will also count towards the State of Florida's Civic Literacy requirement.

## Course Objectives

All General Education area objectives can be found [here](#).

1. Address how the Civil War and Reconstruction set the stage for the development of the modern United States.
2. Explore how US involvement in the Spanish-American War, World War One, and World War Two reshaped US foreign policy and civil society.
3. Present the origins of the Cold War, its implications for US international relations, and its influence on American political culture.
4. Enable students to analyze and evaluate the origins and influences of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the women's movement, and New Right conservatism.
5. Teach students how to analyze historical documents and scholarship from a range of authors and time periods.

## Student Learning Outcomes

A student who successfully completes this course will:

1. Describe the factual details of the substantive historical episodes under study.
2. Identify and analyze foundational developments that shaped American history since 1877 using critical thinking skills.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the primary ideas, values, and perceptions that have shaped American history.
4. Demonstrate competency in civic literacy.

Objectives—General Education and Social and Behavioral Sciences (S)

CATEGORY	SOCIAL SCIENCE SLOS	STATE SLO ASSIGNMENTS	COURSE-SPECIFIC
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Content	Identify, describe, and explain key themes, principles, and terminology; the history, theory and/or methodologies used; and social institutions, structures and processes.	Outcomes 1-4	Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the details of the substantive historical episodes of US History since 1877 by analyzing primary and secondary sources in short papers, homework assignments, exams, and in-class discussion.
Critical Thinking	Apply formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis effectively to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions. Assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.	Outcomes 1-4	Students will demonstrate their ability in applying qualitative and quantitative methods by analyzing primary and secondary sources in short papers, homework assignments, and exams by using critical thinking skills.
Communication	Communication is the development and expression of ideas in written and oral forms.	Outcomes 1-4	<p>Students will identify and explain key developments that shaped United States history since 1877 in written assignments and class discussion.</p> <p>Students will demonstrate their understandings of the primary ideas, values, and perceptions that have shaped United States history and will describe them in written assignments,</p>

			exams, and class discussion.
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## Graded Work

### Required Materials

Selected primary and secondary documents online via Canvas

E.L. Doctorow, *Ragtime* Reprint. New York: Random House, 2007. (ISBN 978-0812978186)

George Takei, *They Called Us Enemy*. Marietta, Ga: Top Shelf Productions, 2019. (ISBN 978-1603094504)

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*. Reprint. New York: Mariner Books, 2009. (ISBN 978-0618706419)

*American Yawp Reader*—free online document reader accessed at:

<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader.html>

There is no textbook for this class, but for students who wish to read one, I recommend *The American Yawp*, which is free and available online at: <http://www.americanyawp.com/>

### Grading Components

Category	Weight
Class Discussion	10%
Class Homework	10%
Test #1	20%
Test #2	20%
Test #3	20%
Final Essay	20%

The participation portion of your grade includes Class Discussion (10%) and Homework (10%). Here is how your participation grade is calculated: For each discussion section, you will receive two grades, one for homework and one for your work in class discussion. Homework will vary from week to week but will include reflection papers, primary document analyses, timelines, and key term definitions. The grades will be out of 10 possible points. At the end of the semester your scores will be averaged, and this will be your participation grade—for example, if you get a 10 on every homework assignment and class discussion, your participation average will be 100%.

Here's a general rubric of what we're looking for, participation-wise:

10/10 This student has not only done the reading but has actively engaged with its main themes, completed the homework thoughtfully, and participated in class discussion in such a way that demonstrates a command of the material.

- 8/10 This student has completed the readings and the homework but may have done so cursorily; speaks in class occasionally in a way that demonstrates satisfactory but not excellent engagement with the material.
- 5/10 This student may or may not have done the reading, and the homework does not reflect active engagement with the themes of the text; student does not speak in class, or occasionally does but does not demonstrate engagement with the material.
- 0/10 This student was absent, or was present and did not turn in homework.

The reading assignments for each discussion section are listed on the syllabus.

There will be three tests. Each will cover the material up to that point in the semester. Tests will be handwritten in class (50 minutes), and will include identifications, short answer questions, and essays.

Students will write one final 4-6 page research essay, for which a more specific assignment prompt will be posted to Canvas. The essay is an exercise in historical research, synthesis, and writing, and will ask students to complete the following:

1) Begin with three **dates**: the year of your birth, the year of one of your parents' births, and the year of one of your grandparents' births. (For example: 2004, 1969, and 1938).

2) Do **research**. Find two primary sources for each year you are studying. Examples of primary sources include (but are not limited to):

- newspapers, letters, diaries, speeches, magazines, novels, memoirs, films, songs, interviews, and poems. We will discuss in class where these types of sources can be found during research.

3) Then, in the course of doing your research, pick one of the following **historical themes**:

- gender, race, patriotism, religion, nationalism, class, violence, sexuality, technology, ethnicity.
- if you would like to write on a different theme, get your instructor's approval beforehand

4) Finally, in a written essay of 4-6 pages, **explain** how your sources illustrate change over time with regards to your theme. How do your sources differ from one another? In what ways are they similar?

Essays will be graded for:

- 1) Research—has this student found relevant, interesting primary sources?
- 2) Theme—has this student identified a significant historical theme that the primary sources illuminate?
- 3) Argument—has this student explained the significance of the sources, and made an argument about change over time?

- 4) Style—has this student written in a grammatically correct, clear writing style?

The final essay will be due at **NOON**, on **Tuesday, April 28**.

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	100-93
A-	92-90
B+	89-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-77
C	76-73
C-	72-70
D+	69-67
D	66-63
D-	62-60
E	59-0

All non-whole number grades .5 and above will be rounded up (for example, an 89.5 will be rounded up to a 90)

See the UF Catalog's [Grades and Grading Policies](#) for information on how UF assigns grade points.

Note: A minimum grade of C is required to earn General Education credit.

### University Assessment Policies

Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the [Catalog](#).

### University Policies and Resources

#### University Policies

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

#### Procedure for conflict resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Seth Bernstein (Associate Chair) ([sethbernstein@ufl.edu](mailto:sethbernstein@ufl.edu), 352-273-3399). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester.

Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261).

## Course Calendar

### Week One (Jan 12-16) *Reconstruction and the Promise of Freedom, 1865-1877*

**READ:** Peter Stearns, “Why Study History”?, *Perspectives on History*, 1998 (Canvas) [2561 words]

Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 18) [1047 words]

### Week Two (Jan 19-23) *The Gilded Age and Industrial America, 1877—1900*

**READ:** Doctorow, *Ragtime*, (Part 1, pp. 3-105)

Andrew Carnegie, “The Triumph of America” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 18) [985 words]

### Week Three (Jan 26-30) *The Progressive Era, 1890-1914*

**READ:** Doctorow, *Ragtime* (Part II, pp. 109-212)

Jacob Riis, “How the Other Half Lives” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 18) [1067 words]

### Week Four (Feb 2-6) *America in the World, The 1898-1918*

**READ:** Finish Doctorow, *Ragtime* (pp. 213-336)

“William McKinley on American Expansionism” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 19) [504 words]

Mark Twain, “The War Prayer” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 19) [925 words]

### Week Five (Feb 9-13) *World War One, 1914-1918*

**TEST #1—Thursday, Feb 12**

### Week Six (Feb 16-20) *The Return to Normalcy, 1918-1927*

**READ:** David Colburn, “Rosewood and America in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* (1997): 175-192 (Canvas).

W.E.B. DuBois, “Returning Soldiers” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 21) [628 words]

Hiram Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 22) [1070 words]

### Week Seven (Feb 23-27) *The Consumer Revolution and the Roaring 20s*



**READ:** John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. Reprint. New York: Penguin, 1990: 129-54 (Canvas).  
Advertisement, *Theatre Magazine*, 1921. “She Always Looks So Individual—So Herself” [391 words] (Canvas)

**Week Eight (Mar 2-6) *The Great Depression, 1930s***

**READ:** Takai, *They Called Us Enemy*, pp. 5-108  
Herbert Hoover on the New Deal (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 23) [832 words]  
Huey P. Long, “Every Man a King” (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 23) [1993 words]  
Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Re-nomination Acceptance Speech (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 23) [914 words]

**Week Nine (Mar 9-13) *The Era of World War II***

**READ:** Finish Takai, *They Called Us Enemy*, 108-208.  
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Executive Order 9066 (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 24) [532 words]

**Test #2—Thursday, March 12**

**SPRING BREAK Mar 16-20**

**Week Ten (Mar 23-27) *The Era of World War II, con’t***

**READ:** United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “American Witnesses,” 2020, pp. 1-14.  
(Canvas)

Harry Truman Announces the Bombing of Hiroshima (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 24) [979 words]

Atomic Bomb Primary Sources (Canvas) [759 words]:

Kawamoto, Yoshitaka. Testimony of a Hiroshima Survivor. Atomic Archive  
(<https://www.atomicarchive.com/resources/documents/hibakusha/yoshitaka.html>)

Manhattan Engineer District, U.S. Army. Report on the Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Directed by Major General Leslie R. Groves. Atomic Archive.

(<https://www.atomicarchive.com/resources/documents/med/index.html>)

Leahy, Admiral William D. *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman* (excerpt) (Document 2,

<https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/practice-dbq-decision-drop-atomic-bomb-hiroshima-nagasaki>)

LIFE Magazine. Photographs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the Atomic Bombs. TIME / LIFE Archive, September 1945 (<https://www.life.com/history/hiroshima-and-nagasaki-photos-from-the-ruins/>)

**Week Eleven (Mar 30-Apr 3) *The Cold War 1950s***

**READ:** O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, pp. 1-116  
The Truman Doctrine (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 25) [673 words]  
NSC-68 (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 25) [1020 words]

**Week Twelve (Apr 6-10) *The Vietnam Era, 1955-1975***

**READ:** Finish O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, pp. 117-233.  
Joseph McCarthy on Communism (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 25) [879 words]  
Statement by John Kerry of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 28) [825 words]

**Test #3—Thursday, April 9**

**Week Thirteen (Apr 13-17) *The Black Freedom Struggle***

**READ:** A Phillip Randolph on Racial Discrimination (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 24) [590 words]  
Rosa Parks on Life in Montgomery, Alabama (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 26) [1014 words]  
Fannie Lou Hamer Testimony (*Yanp Reader*, ch. 27) [1232 words]  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," University of Pennsylvania  
([https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)) (Canvas) [6934 words]

**Week Fourteen (Apr 20-24) *America in the World, 1974-present***

Last Day of Class, Tuesday Apr 21

**FINAL ESSAY due Tues Apr 28 at NOON**